

An Interview with Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick, Clark County Board of County Commissioners, and was conducted on 8/18/22 by Magdalena Martinez. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

**Interview with Marilyn Kirkpatrick
(Clark County Commission)**

Date: 8-18-2022

SPEAKERS: Magdalena Martinez, Marilyn Kirkpatrick

Magdalena Martinez [00:01]

All right. So I am here today with Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick. Today is August 18th, 2022. And we are talking about the COVID recovery in Nevada, and in particular, southern Nevada. And so, I just wanted to confirm that you consent to participate in this interview. You consent to be recorded.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [00:20]

Yes.

Magdalena Martinez [00:22]

And then you consent to have your name attributed to the transcript.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [00:26]

Correct.

Magdalena Martinez [00:28]

And I will follow up, after the transcript is complete, with a release form for the library archives.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [00:35]

Okay.

Magdalena Martinez [00:36]

All right. So let's go ahead and start a conversation. You started to talk a little bit about how you saw your role. If you could talk a little bit more about how you saw your role throughout the pandemic.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [00:48]

Well, honestly, I served a couple of different hats.

Magdalena Martinez [00:50]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [00:53]

Which, at the time, worked well for collaboration. So my first hat was the chair of the County Commission, but it was through the Southern Nevada Health District we became aware of what the issue was, and how we move forward. We were watching it for months, around the world, to see what was going on. And it really was in January that we tested our first person from Wuhan China. And at that time, it took a lot.

So my role, in my mind, was to collaborate and bring people together – because I also chaired the Water Authority. So, what assets did we have? And that truly was the first thing we had to evaluate; what assets did we have, as a group, in order to figure it out?

Magdalena Martinez [01:46]

Mm-hmm. And in my conversations with other electeds, so, for instance, City of Las Vegas, Olivia Diaz talked about the instrumental role that you played in bringing people together. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [02:04]

Well, really, it was important, right? So, we had seen a very divided community in the beginning. everyone looking out for themselves. And we know that we are better than that. And so, how could we make sure that the most vulnerable, actually, were having other resources that they need because they didn't have the means to do anything differently? So it was – and that's one of my strengths, is to bring people together. Because I don't care about the territory; I don't care about the title. But I do care that everybody, regardless of demographics, social-economic, where you live in the valley, that they get what they need to move forward.

Magdalena Martinez [02:49]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [02:52]

So I stood up the MAC very quickly, once we tested our first person so that we could be working in that direction. We have an amazing emergency services system here, and in Clark County in particular, along with the state. And it's really, you know, here's what I would tell you: I'm very passionate about this issue because it overtook my life for two and a half years. But what I would tell you is, I sit on national boards, and they wished that they could have had that same collaboration that we had because they were left trying to scramble themselves. So we actually became role models on many issues, and that's to be commended. And unfortunately, we don't talk about that.

Magdalena Martinez [03:44]

Okay. Tell me more about that. How did that come about? Was there a name for the group? How often did you meet?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [03:56]

So, our MAC Committee, which is the multi agency communications center, that brings all the cities together; that brings all their emergency managers together; it brings county managers – there are approximately 75 people that sit on that committee.

Magdalena Martinez [04:09]

Okay.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [04:10]

And it is not only pre-crisis; during a crisis; it is the recovery component as well. So that we're all kind of working in the same direction. And that is one of the reasons that we were able to turn

it around so fast. Nationally, everybody's required to have one, but I feel like we're the only ones that actually use it, and that was our strength.

Magdalena Martinez [04:34]

Uh-huh. And so, why were you – it sounds like you feel like MAC was ready to go. Hit the ground running. Was it an issue of funding? Of prioritizing? What made it work?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [04:51]

Well, so what I would tell you is, the MAC is comprised of workers, right? Worker bees. UNLV has somebody on there; Adam Garcia was phenomenal as far as the emergency side helping us. He was very helpful: "What can we do?" But really, that committee is made up of, I want to say, movers and shakers within the government world, to make it come together, right? So it's made up of the chambers on there, the City of Las Vegas – North Las Vegas, Boulder City, Henderson, the tribes are on there, Nellis Airforce Base is on there, police, fire, county managers are on there. Clark County holds the bigger stick with the bulk of the people because we are the – that is within our statute of we've got to provide social services, right, regardless.

So we literally had a lot of good people that honestly sacrificed their livelihoods and their own families. I remember not going home for the first 24 hours at all. Trying to be on the phone with my family to make them know that life was going to be okay but I needed to be here. And there was a group of seven that that's exactly what they did. We said to our families, "I get it, but here's my role and my responsibility, and this is what I need to do." And that's kind of what made it work because we all pulled together, you know. At one point, Paul from the Chamber literally stayed up all night helping me type the Leap stuff so that we could have it to the governor's office by a.m., so, at three o'clock in the morning, we're conversing.

So there were no territories, but there were some keys that were willing to put in every bit of work that it needed. I mean, I remember, the Chamber – going around and delivering gloves to truckers, so that they could actually deliver a product. I remember the Resort Association, Matt Maddox, I could call him in the middle of the night. He took calls from people wanting to know "Where do I go get tested?" and all of that. I mean, he stood up the Wynn right away. So there were a lot of good people we had: The Venetian, who sent an airplane to China to pick up product for us. Other places didn't have that international relationship to make it come together. So there are a lot of reasons why it came together.

Magdalena Martinez [07:55]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [07:56]

But I mean, it's a lot of the right people, in the same place, with the same mission.

Magdalena Martinez [07:59]

Mm-hmm. And it seems like relationships and trust were key.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [08:04]

For sure. Yeah. Because at the same time, what you needed to see was – people had to be – it was

a scary time, so you had to be able to really keep it close to the vest, right? Because you didn't want misinformation to get out to scare people, or even more, to cause panic.

Magdalena Martinez [08:23]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [08:26]

And so it's pretty hard to tell people to say, "You can't say anything," right?

Magdalena Martinez [08:32]

Yeah.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [08:34]

Not even – my own husband, I said, "Hey, I can't, sorry. But trust me, you'll know if there's a big problem. Just trust me."

Magdalena Martinez [08:41]

Yeah. Now, if I wanted to learn more about the MAC, the Multiple Agency Collaboration, if I google that, will I find information on that? Or is that something that you can point me in a direction?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [08:56]

Billy Samuels was the guy. He was pretty – he was the guy that was in charge of it, so I can send you his email address so that you can send it. But I mean, he literally – he was an important piece of it.

Magdalena Martinez [09:17]

Mm-hmm, okay. That would be great. Thank you so much.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [09:20]

Mm-hmm.

Magdalena Martinez [09:21]

You started to talk a little bit about the beginning of the pandemic. And from what you remember, can you walk me through the key point in terms of a timeline of what happened, when and how you saw your role, or what you did as Chair of these multiple organizations?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [09:44]

Well, I want to start with my role in the Health District first.

Magdalena Martinez [09:46]

Okay.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [09:49]

Because that's really where it became important to us. So the Health District, we were monitoring it. UMC contacted me as the chair of the County Commission and said, "We've tested

our first person." I contacted the Health District. We sat at a table with the county manager, and Lori Nelson-Kraft from the Convention Authority; because it was prior to the Super Bowl – so what did that look like for us? Would a lot of people be impacted?

So we did that, and we actually, at that time, sent the tests out. And remember, we only had 40 tests a week that we could dole out – 40 tests – so we had to be very careful about who we gave them to. And so, we sent it out. It was in the third quarter of the Super Bowl that we were notified by the CDC that the person was negative. Which, you know, we were struggling – "Oh, my gosh, what do we do at this time," right?

Magdalena Martinez [11:03]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [11:05]

Because we don't know, and now, we're just going to have to "wing it," and that's exactly what we did. So when our person came back, then we were notified. So we were watching it still in February. We started to see trucking issues because it was happening in New York and it was happening, so we stood up the MAC in February, and we started meeting to address transportation issues because they were the most important. Because what was happening was, if you remember, we had a toilet paper shortage. We had a paper towel, a Clorox – and the sad part was, we had tons of product. It's just the truckers couldn't meet the time frames in order to be able to deliver.

Magdalena Martinez [11:46]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [11:49]

So they had to – they worked 10-hour shifts, which is all they could have in their logbooks. But they were sitting on docks for 10 hours, and people were ordering like a Christmas-type order, which means they typically start in July, and then they order.

So we were trying to keep the panic down at the grocery stores. Because, if you remember, people were ornery, and they were buying pallets of water, just because they were reading about what was happening in New York. So that is really why we stood up the MAC right away because we had to get a handle, regionally, on the transportation issues because it was causing panic amongst folks.

So then, in March, we had known that there was a person that was suspected to be positive, but because we had to work through the feds for the VA Hospital, and they couldn't share information, we didn't know what that looked like. There was a big convention in town, a minority convention, which people started contracting – getting sick. And so, from there, it just snowballed very quickly. But you know, what I would tell you is, I called two other states. I called New York, "What are you doing with your tourists?" and they said, "Nothing, and we send them on their way." I said, "We can't do that. We have a brand to protect. We have other things, so we're just going to go in a different direction." We stood up a COVID hotel, which, to this day, many people don't even know existed. But if you stayed at that COVID hotel, we made you

a gift basket. We hand-delivered it. We provided medical care on-site, and then we helped our tourists get to where they needed to, which we were the only ones in the country to do that. Because at the same time of addressing the sickness, we had to protect our brand, and that always worked hand-in-hand.

Magdalena Martinez [14:07]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [14:09]

That's why – I could tell you tons of stories that probably nobody ever really knows exists, you know?

Magdalena Martinez [14:16]

Well, as you think about those, what is the most compelling story that you wish other people knew?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [14:23]

Well, I wish that other people knew that one, we did everything right. We really did, for as much as people complain that we didn't know what we were doing, we really did have a good system in place. And unfortunately, we couldn't tell them all the details, right? So – but we were the first one in the country to monitor the wastewater in Nevada. And that came from conversations with Humboldt Nevada, and me being the chair of the Water Authority, how could we monitor this? And the CDC took all the credit, but it was really Nevada that was the trailblazer.

And the friendships that were founded throughout this process are forever worth it, and it makes our little community a great big community when it comes to coming together when we had to – and we did. And we had arguments, we cried together, we laughed together, we yelled and screamed. People will say I was the meanest person ever. Because if I got tired of your conversation, I just hung up because I couldn't –

But overall, I wouldn't trade any of the friendships that I made throughout it, and my grandkids made friends with their neighbors because they were all stuck at home together, and they played over the wall. So, you know, but the saddest part is, right, we let kids down because we couldn't get people to listen to what we were trying to tell them. And you know, I'm forever sad that we didn't do kids right. We just didn't, and I hope other people admit that. We did not do kids right.

Magdalena Martinez [16:08]

What do you mean by that? Was it the shutdown of the schools, or was it providing them with the services they needed? What do you mean by that?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [16:17]

All of the above. So, from day one, when they said they were shutting down the schools; it was the trustees who wanted the schools shut down, and we told them "Please do not. Because we're not seeing an impact with kids now; we're not seeing teachers impacted." We invited all of the trustees to the MAC. Only three showed up. The rest said they wouldn't because they were too scared to leave their homes. We begged them for two more weeks, and they said, "Nope. We're

done today." They got over 70,000 petitions to go to the governor's office. They said that they were just going to start calling in sick; 2,600 teachers called in sick in one day.

Magdalena Martinez [17:09]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [17:10]

So we didn't have a choice, right? But here's what happened: the first day we said, "Hey, what about food?" A lot of these kids rely on food, and on how to get there. There was no plan to get food; so we had food in all the wrong places. We said, "What about distance learning?" They said, "We're not worried about that right now. We'll figure that out later." Well, the "later" never came, until we said, "Hey, they can't keep doing this." But, you know, the trustees were very hard to work with, and they were not helpful when it came – it was never about the kids to them. It was about the adults. And I don't mind saying that publicly because I said it several times, right?

So my granddaughter had to go to the YMCA, which was one of our biggest partners when it came to providing childcare.

Magdalena Martinez [18:07]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [18:11]

And because we had nurses, we had all these people that had to go to work. And the common theme was, from a lot of teachers, from a lot of trustees, from a lot of people who were like, "We're not here to be your babysitters," and I'm like "Hey, you're missing the point. The point is, people built their lives around their child going to school during this time."

Magdalena Martinez [18:35]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [18:37]

And so there's a lot of very sad people, and there's a lot of people that, you know, they should own some of this mental crisis. I said, "And I will tell you, in that meeting with the MAC, a kid from District B will be the first person today. Trust me when I tell you." And guess what? Three children died within the first week in my district.

Magdalena Martinez [19:01]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [19:03]

And I said, "I told you, we just asked for two more weeks, so that we could be prepared and get the kids on track," and they didn't care. So, we were notified at 2 p.m. that there would be no more school, we were shutting down, and the announcement would be made at five o'clock. So I'm pretty unforgiving for that because District B lost seven children to either domestic violence or suicide, and it really wasn't necessary. There was a point when it made sense to close schools but it wasn't necessary for the beginning. It really wasn't. Think about this: we shut down when

we had 124 positives, we were managing our hospitals, and we were beating the odds at everything because we had people working. So – but it's all good. We stayed home.

Magdalena Martinez [20:01]

What could have made the difference?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [20:04]

Two weeks. Two weeks [??20:07], people trusting in our healthcare system because we have phenomenal healthcare. People at the top – Dr. Leguen had been through a pandemic. He'd come from an impoverished community in Cuba. So he knew the importance of those that didn't have the advantages of others. And we really – even 12 hours would have made a difference because we shut down in 124 – and I get it – 124 positives. But understand, across the state, we still had beds for 700, you know what I mean? So hopeful days would have been okay.

Magdalena Martinez [20:53]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [20:55]

And so, it just created a whole chain reaction. So what happened is, we had – and this is why "Delivering with Dignity" with Punam got stood up at midnight. Because we were getting calls – I was getting calls. Foster families that, all of a sudden, had all these children. Didn't know they needed to be able to feed them breakfast. They didn't have groceries to accommodate that. The stores were somewhat empty. Then we were requiring them to go sit in a school district line to get breakfast, and all of the kids had to be in the car. Remember how ridiculous that was?

Magdalena Martinez [21:36]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [21:38]

And then they were going to the food bank, so now these children sat in the car, for 10 hours a day, just to eat, right? So I called Punam and said, "Here's my problem. I really just need to give all these vulnerable families the ability to have a ready-made meal, because they're already struggling with distance learning and all these things. And so we got "Delivering with Dignity," and today, it works great still, and we're going to get funded for the long term.

Magdalena Martinez [22:09]

Okay.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [22:11]

And I know I'm all over the board, but there were a lot of things going on at the same time.

Magdalena Martinez [22:17]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [22:18]

But my biggest regret is the kids, right?

Magdalena Martinez [22:19]

Yeah. No, they're not all over the place – it makes perfect sense. In thinking about that particular challenge, were there other challenges during the process that you wish you could have anticipated or can help inform us moving forward?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [22:38]

Well, here's what I would tell you. We were always looking for solutions and there were a lot of challenges. But there was no challenge that we couldn't overcome, right? School was the biggest challenge that we couldn't overcome because we didn't have a say. Had we had a say, we could have overcome it. But that was probably the biggest one. Daycare was a bit of a challenge in the beginning. But like I said, we had – the Y stepped up, and we were able to actually keep them open. And you know, crazy enough, there were 461 daycare facilities across the state, and at that time, we had five impacted people. So we were doing things right naturally, but we were just a little more cautious.

Magdalena Martinez [23:31]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [23:33]

And they became like a safe haven for a lot of people.

Magdalena Martinez [23:38]

I'm trying to remember. I don't the – so the decision to close down the schools was made by the trustees, not the governor?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [23:47]

Well, it was at the trustees' request, right? And it was the trustees encouraging the parents and students to shut us down. So that story will never be told, but we literally brought them in and said, "Please, please, please, we can't," because they were saying publicly, "We need to shut down schools," and we're saying, "No, we can't." And the governor was getting a lot of pressure from 100,000 parents. I mean, what do you do, right?

Magdalena Martinez [24:20]

Yeah.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [24:21]

And what do you do when the teachers are calling in sick? Now you don't have enough people to actually host a classroom. So had the trustees not been afraid themselves, and actually participated in the MAC – because they did not – it was only the superintendent; so he could only deliver the message. They didn't participate. And they had a seat at the table, and they were invited every single time, and they did not participate. Had they participated and understood the bigger picture, it would have made a difference. It really would have.

Magdalena Martinez [25:00]

I was the parent of a public school student and was very concerned. And I think that yes, there was a lack of information from my perspective.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [25:11]

Yep.

Magdalena Martinez [25:13]

And had I had information, had I had reassurances, perhaps I wouldn't have marched into her principal's office saying, "She's not coming back on Monday."

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [25:22]

Right.

Magdalena Martinez [25:24]

Because I think the shutdown happened with the schools on a Sunday.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [25:27]

Yeah. At six o'clock. Never forget it.

Magdalena Martinez [25:30]

I remember. We were at the Premium Outlet Malls across the street from the government center, and I just had this feeling like – and it was packed, and I had this feeling like, this may be the last time we're out here for a while."

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [25:43]

Right. But the trustees, we tried giving them all the information, and they just didn't – they were afraid themselves. And you know, that is one of the things we learned. We had some people across the valley, in emergency management positions, that could not keep up with the pressure, that was cracking and were falling apart.

Magdalena Martinez [26:13]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [26:15]

And it's not a bad thing, right? I mean, what better time, during a crisis, to know where your strengths and where your weaknesses are? But we had to replace some people because we said, "Hey, maybe this a better job for you right now because we need someone that is not afraid." And here's the thing: I'm not going to lie. I sat in my office and cried at times because I had never rebuilt a community. I'd never – I'm not educated, you know what I mean? So I never had to start all over, from scratch, for 2.3 million people. There were times when my own husband and my own family were stressing me out because they thought they were going to die. And I finally had to send my husband to Utah, where there's no internet. We have a second home there. And I said, "Please. Just go there. Get off the internet. This is not helping the situation." My grandkids, "Nana, are we going to die," right?

Magdalena Martinez [27:19]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [27:21]

So, imagine, that was a lot of pressure to endure. But at the end of the day, people were relying on me to walk outside my office, dry my eyes, and say, "Okay. Here's what we're going to do," right? And then I became the *bitch*. "Oh, my gosh, she's such a bitch." Well, listen – because that was the only way I could keep it together.

Magdalena Martinez [27:43]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [27:45]

And people forget that, and they don't understand the emotions. Because you really have to put your own family – I mean there were 100 people that put their own families on the back burner.

Magdalena Martinez [27:56]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [27:59]

And we took criticism all the way around – no matter what we did. But we, at least, tried to communicate with people. We, at least, tried to have – the more weekly meetings that we had, the more information that we could get out, and that was collaborating with folks. And one of our great successes, we were one of the top five in the country being able to get those tests done across the board.

Magdalena Martinez [28:25]

Mm-hmm. I'm really moved, Marilyn, by what you're sharing, in terms of the ability to know that you've got a big target on your back, on your front, and everywhere else. And your conviction in your purpose as a public servant.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [28:45]

Well, thank you. But I mean, there are a lot of people that I got frustrated with because they just never came back, right? They came back on June 3rd and said, "How come I don't know what's going on?" I'm like, "Hmm..." So we've done a lot between March 5th and June 4th, you know?

Magdalena Martinez [29:06]

Mm-hmm, yes. Now, in thinking about the different levels of government, everything from the federal to the county, the municipalities. Is there anything you wish that the government, at any level, would have done differently or could do differently now in response to the pandemic – Or there was an economic downturn that, of course, we haven't even touched? But do you wish that something could have been done differently?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [29:35]

Well, here's what I would tell you: it would have been nice – here's the way I work, and I work differently, but this is what I would have preferred. And at the end of the day, this is what I will tell you: counties across the state stepped up, from the smallest county in Lincoln, to Humboldt, to Mineral, to Washoe. County commissioners stepped up across the state with little direction. We kind of came together as a group; I happened to be the chair of NACO of 17 counties. And

my friends in the rural areas panicked because they didn't have any resources, so they were no different than my constituents in 89115, right, because they were in the same scenario.

So we, as the counties, came together to figure out how could we help each other. So, one of the things in the beginning that people don't realize, the College of Agriculture loaned us our first testing machine until we could get one delivered. So we used a cow testing machine to test people for coronavirus, which, you know, animals have been doing it – but had we not had those relationships and those partnerships with the College of Ag., we'd probably still be waiting, like Wisconsin was, like some of these other states were.

But I would have wished that we could have all kind of said, "Okay, you handle this; you do this; you do that." But we really didn't get that. We were all making individual calls. Counties were circling together to figure out, what do you learn? What did you learn? So that we could kind of keep it together. So it's just unfortunate that – and I think we've made those changes, right? So, we didn't know, at the airport, at the cruise ship, people were being delivered until they were in the air. We didn't know what that looked like. We didn't know where to get vans. We didn't know all of that stuff. And it would have just been so much easier.

Magdalena Martinez [32:00]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [32:01]

If we could truly – and we got there, after the first six months, where we communicated on a regular basis. But the first six months were hard when it came to communicating. And more importantly, communicating to the public the truth. And here's what I know: people, they may not like the truth, but they can deal with it a lot easier than if you just tell them nothing.

Magdalena Martinez [32:30]

Yeah. And it was a different federal environment as well – national level, I should say.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [32:40]

Well, here's what I will tell you, though. And me, I got in a big argument with Secretary [B-??32:46] right? She was not a nice person. She kept calling the City of Las Vegas. They were not engaged in any of the testing, the vaccines, or any of that. And she kept telling me – and another thing, we were the first state to actually come up with a zip code map. We were that first state. So, we did a lot of "firsts," and we don't even tout what we did. And that really started because it kept being my district that was high, and I kept trying to figure out – we're [where] in 89031 – so that I could educate people and maybe I could help them. And that's when we put it together; the Health District put it together by zip code, and it became an ally for us, right?

Magdalena Martinez [33:33]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [33:36]

So that we could manage. So we knew where the hotspots were. So we were tracking it that way.

Magdalena Martinez [33:40]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [33:43]

We got there, but it would have just been nice to have regular conversations with our delegations. But I will tell you that all of the county commissioners across the state came together. And NACO was a huge partner. National NACO was the best because they helped us with federal dollars. They did our lobbying for us. We gave them the numbers on what we needed to get a handle on it. And National NACO, they stepped up in a big way. We would not have any money today if it weren't for them. And imagine, they were representing 4,000 counties across the nation.

Magdalena Martinez [34:27]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [34:29]

And they looked to Nevada because we could get information to them quickly.

Magdalena Martinez [34:35]

And that's the National Association of Counties.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [34:38]

Uh-huh.

Magdalena Martinez [34:39]

Now, you said that counties were in a unique position, compared to all of the other levels of government. Can you tell me why?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [34:49]

Well, one, the state lab didn't have the ability to step up, right, and process things. The counties had assets that we could turn around. And most importantly, we were responsible for social service.

Magdalena Martinez [35:07]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [35:09]

And we were in high need of social services on many levels.

Magdalena Martinez [35:12]

Yes.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [35:14]

And so the health districts contributed to that social service. So, with counties and the health districts working together across the state, we were able to leverage information, we were able to – at one point, we were sending masks to Washoe, Lincoln because our firefighters have a certain

kind of mask that they can use. Carson City got the brunt of many of those people that were on the cruise ship.

Magdalena Martinez [35:47]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [35:50]

So, we worked with them to help fan them out because what did that look like? So I would just say that counties, Nevada NACO, and National NACO really stepped up to the challenge. Because we were all in the Health District, and in most places, it's a county function.

Magdalena Martinez [36:07]

Mm-hmm. Now, in thinking about everything that you did with the National Associations, with the MAC, what do you think were the most innovative ways that the county met the challenges of the pandemic? And perhaps, you've already addressed it – so, the collaborations, the programs – is there anything else that comes to mind?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [36:33]

So, there were a couple of things. We did a lot of "firsts," right? So we did the testing on all people, regardless of whether or not you had symptoms. That information came down from the CDC on April 29th, and on May 1st, we were testing everybody because we were stood up and ready to go.

Magdalena Martinez [36:55]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [36:58]

We tracked our sewer report, which that became a key indicator because it could tell us two weeks out what we were going to see and where we were going to see it. We did our tours, hospital, and hotel situation so that our tours and our brand kept going. I think we did a lot of great things, and we don't talk about it. And look, at the end of the day, was it chaotic? Was it crazy? What would you change? I mean, look: the thing that I would change most is I'd be out there – and we tried to keep people in the mantra that we need more medical students. More, more, more, more. And you know, the people have taken their foot off the gas *again*, as usual, right? So we're not really doing anything. So, you can approve all the labs, and you can approve all the mental health benefits, but we didn't approve one staff that actually could make that difference.

Magdalena Martinez [38:06]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [38:08]

We have money as a Clark County School District. We have 150 positions available for social service. But we don't have any social workers, and we're doing nothing to grow the medical field. Nothing, nothing, nothing.

Magdalena Martinez [38:20]
Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [38:22]
And if it weren't for the National Guard, I don't know where we'd be today.

Magdalena Martinez [38:26]
What could we do to grow those fields?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [38:29]
Well, one, you've got to get kids engaged. And there's no reason, walking out of high school, that they shouldn't have their CNA. There's no reason that they shouldn't. And we need hundreds of thousands of those kids. Because CNA is just the basics, right?

Magdalena Martinez [38:47]
Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [38:49]
And then going to college, and then – or all of those. But social workers, all of those things, we're doing zero to encourage it. So it was, "Oh, Battle Born – whatever the hell it was. Battle Born Medical...well, at the end of the day, we didn't get a lot of people from that. We truly did not get a lot of people from that.

Magdalena Martinez [39:13]
And a lot of it was because our own medical rules were protectionist. So we were protecting much more of our local people with licenses as opposed to allowing others. And we kept some of that in the last directive, you know, to allow that to continue to happen. But I don't see one bill draft to change that – because we know it works.

Magdalena Martinez [39:40]
Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [39:41]
We had National Guard assistance – CNAs and those types of people administering vaccines. No one – and there's not one bill draft to change that stuff.

Magdalena Martinez [39:52]
What would a bill draft look like, I'm wondering.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [39:56]
Well, you could look. It's really about changing – allowing for the regulations to be changed, to continue to allow the current practices that we put in place during an emergency.

Magdalena Martinez [40:07]
Mm-hmm. Okay.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [40:10]

But if you look at all the bill drafts, nobody's talking about that. Because you know why? COVID's over. They're not worried about it. (laughs)

Magdalena Martinez [40:17]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [40:21]

So, it's what we do in Nevada, right? We're historically that way. We talk about all these things that we do – you could throw all the money in the world at it, but if you don't have the workforce, you've got nothing.

Magdalena Martinez [40:34]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [40:36]

So we could have another crisis, and we'll be in the same boat, and hope and pray that the National Guard – which we had to rely on our federal delegation to make that happen.

Magdalena Martinez [40:48]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [40:51]

Because we weren't getting it.

Magdalena Martinez [40:52]

Yeah. Commissioner Kirkpatrick, I want to end with a specific question that is not related to what we've just talked about. Several years ago – 2016 – I interviewed women legislators when we became a female majority. And in my conversations with them, I'd asked them, kind of like, how they learned the ropes and how they entered – how they survived – policy-making spaces not intended primarily for women, particularly women of color. And your name kept coming up as an important mentor.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [41:27]

Oh, thank you.

Magdalena Martinez [41:29]

So, I'm wondering if you could tell me just a little bit about that – how you saw your role when you were in the legislature, and bringing in women, and making sure that they were equipped to do the work they went to do?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [41:43]

Well, you know, the great thing, and the difference between men and women, women are very detail-oriented. Women are willing to go without sleep to get the job done, right? Women are huge multi-taskers because not only are we doing our family budgets, we are doing – taking kids

to school. We're participating in sports. We're cooking dinner for the rest of the family. We're doing laundry. We're making sure the grass is taken care of.

And so, women are good persons to be in the legislature because it's fast-paced and policy-driven. And so I always tried to help women be in those chairmanships because one, Teresa Benitez-Thompson, she was pregnant in '13, and she said, "I can't." And I said, "You can, and we'll help you," right? And women circled women to help them be successful. So I always tried to put those women in the place, you know. Olivia – "I never chaired a committee." "Well, it's time. Learn it. We'll help each other, right?" So, Irene Bustamante-Adams, "I don't want to chair tax." "I need you. You've got to."

So, at the end of the day, women need success, right? Because it's very territorial. It's very – "This is my neighborhood. No one else's neighborhood" kind of deal. But I always tried to teach women that it's not – any time that somebody copies your stuff, that's the greatest compliment, right?

Magdalena Martinez [43:33]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [43:34]

Although you're frustrated because they're doing the ribbon cutting, and it really was your idea. But the greatest compliment is somebody else, you know, claims it as theirs.

Magdalena Martinez [43:42]

Right.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [43:46]

Women are collaborators, so I always wanted them to be successful. And I tried to put them in the spots where they could shine. And that's really – Peggy Pierce taught me one big thing in the legislature. You don't need to speak all the time. Because if you speak all the time, they quit listening to you, right? But if you wait, and you strategize, and you play chess when you speak, people will listen. And they, nine times out of ten, you can sway them. And so, I always try to teach people that because it works. It's like playing chess while the men are playing checkers.

Magdalena Martinez [44:28]

And was Peggy Pierce one of your mentors?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [44:31]

Peggy Pierce – no, crazy, enough, she was very "left." I was very moderate. But we became super-good friends, and she taught me the ropes. It was a very sad day for me when she passed away. But she and Chris G. Chris G. taught me how to learn the policy, how to know the front of the statute. Where you turn to insert your stuff. The back of the statute. So I had a lot of great women. But Peggy and Chris were probably two of the best, for me, you know, and I just paid it forward. Although, I'm now the only woman on the County Commission. But I keep up with the boys.

Magdalena Martinez [45:17]

Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time. I want to be respectful of your time.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [45:22]

So, listen. Here's what I would offer you. I'm giving out these books tomorrow, so I can't give it to you today. I'm happy to have one at my office for you. But I just am not trying to give it to the press. And there's nothing in there that's bad; it's more of a memory book.

Magdalena Martinez [45:39]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [45:41]

But it will give you a great timeline of what really happened.

Magdalena Martinez [45:47]

Okay.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [45:50]

And I'm happy to – there are only 200 copies that were made – period.dash. So if you wanted to stop over, you know, on Monday, I would give you a copy of it. But there are only 200 copies because I didn't want it to be something that everybody else had. But a lot of us really kind of needed that closure.

Magdalena Martinez [46:14]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [46:15]

Because we went from spending – I talked to Julia Peake 30 times a day, and I went to nothing, right? So, we're like, hey – my life is not normal. I've got to get back to normal. But I'm happy to share the book, and it has a lot of fun times there. We would send memes some days that got us through. It's, you know, "Show me the money." "What are you talking about?" "How do I pay for this?" "WTF." "Oh, my God, I can't believe it." Or "What do you mean, we can't count the vaccines?" But I'm happy to share it with you.

And kind of the unsung heroes were the school nurses. They were very helpful at the beginning and the whole process. They worked the entire time and all the way through the vaccines. So people don't realize that.

Magdalena Martinez [46:51]

Is that something I could come by tomorrow and pick up?

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [47:11]

Yes. What time do you want to come by tomorrow? We're actually doing lunch for all of the folks. You're welcome to come to the lunch. We're doing lunch from 11:30 to one, and we're giving everybody their book and a little proclamation that says, "Thank you." Because crazy

enough, no one in our community thanked anybody. They just kind of went back to normal, right?

Magdalena Martinez [47:40]

Yeah.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [47:42]

So we have people coming from the state. We have people coming from other counties. So you're welcome to come. It's at 11:30. It's in the Pyramid Room, where we'll be providing lunch, and you could pick up a book then.

Magdalena Martinez [47:59]

That's very generous of you. I don't want to intrude, though, in the luncheon. I know that you-

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:03]

Oh, no, you'll be fine. Everybody's just going to be talking. I think that – so Gregg Maye couldn't come, so we're mailing him his book. Adam Garcia is coming. S[48:16] never responded. I'm trying to think. We invited people from UNLV because they were helpful and part of our team.

Magdalena Martinez [48:23]

Mm-hmm.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:27]

So, you would just be filling in one of those slots, so you're good to go.

Magdalena Martinez [48:29]

I would love that. Thank you so much.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:31]

Yeah. So come tomorrow, 11:30. And the County is closed, just so you know.

Magdalena Martinez [48:38]

Oh, right.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:40]

But we're open, so just see that you're here for the luncheon.

Magdalena Martinez [48:44]

Okay.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:47]

All right?

Magdalena Martinez [48:46]

Thank you. I leave on Saturday to Wednesday, but I don't want to miss the opportunity to pick up this book.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:52]
Nope. So, stop by tomorrow anytime.

Magdalena Martinez [48:56]
Okay.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:57]
And I'll put you on the list right now, okay?

Magdalena Martinez [48:59]
Thank you so much.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [48:60]
All right.

Magdalena Martinez [48:61]
I really appreciate you.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [49:02]
All right, thanks. Okay.

Magdalena Martinez [49:04]
Have a good rest of your day. Bye-bye.

Marilyn Kirkpatrick [49:05]
Thank you. Bye.

End of audio: 49:05